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Haiti Plots for U.S. Planes

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The prosecution of a successful conspiracy to smuggle two T-28 fighter-bombers to dictator Francois Duvalier's regime in Haiti has been stymied because a key witness is being withheld by the Central Intelligence Agency.

The essential witness is a former CIA operative.

The concern expressed by the government is that his testimony in court might embarrass the intelligence agency and possibly expose part of its worldwide activities.

Involved in the plot, which ended with the arrival in Haiti last September of the two surplus planes, are several U. S. pilots and plane dealers, the president of the Bank of Haiti, the Haitian Finance Minister and Rudolph Baboun, Haiti consul general in Miami.

Last July the State Department refused to allow the export of 15 T-28s from Texas to Haiti, where they could have been used by President Duvalier to combat anti-government guerrillas in Haiti's coastal mountains.

But in September, two T-28s (not from the group in Texas were illegally flown from Florida to Haiti in defiance of the State Department ban.

In the past month, three more unlicensed aircraft have been smuggled from the U. S. into Haiti, but no more T-28s —which are small, 300-mph propeller-driven trainers that can be adapted to anti-guerrilla warfare. President Duvalier is reliably reported to be willing to pay for still more plane deliveries, and Federal officials are investigating a series of smuggling operations in the making.

Law enforcement officials had built a complete case against the smugglers, but it was dropped at the request of the State Department in a seeming reversal of its own policy. The department, it turned out, was acting at the behest of the CIA.

The CIA has refused any comment on the T-28 case and on the failure to press the prosecution of Mr. Baboun and the U. S. citizens involved in the smuggling operation.

Some Federal officials indicate that a key witness, whom nobody will discuss, is being prevented from testifying on the grounds that his appearance would be "too sensitive."

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